

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

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SAJ-01 TRSE-00 EB-07 COME-00 /074 W

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R 221736Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5802

SECDEF

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY BONN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 16226

E.O. 11652: XEDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, MPOL, UK, FR, NATO

SUBJ: MASON/BMURGES MEETING

REF: (A) PARIS 27375; (B) PARIS 26754; (C) PARIS 25859

1. WE APPROACHED A NUMBER OF SOURCES IN FCO AND MOD TO GET SOME INDICATION OF THE SUBSTANCE OF THE MASON/BOURGES DISCUSSIONS HERE LAST WEEK. OUR CONTACTS OBSERVED THAT BOTH MASON AND BOURGES "HAD AGREED THEIR GOVERNMENTS WOULD MAINTAIN A HIGH LEVEL OF CONFIDENTIALITY CONCERNING THE SUBSTANCE OF THEIR TALKS". WE ARE ABLE TO CONFIRM THE GENERAL POINTS MADE IN REFS A AND B.

2. OUR SOURCES INDICATED THAT THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF THE VISIT -- WHICH RECEIVED NO MEANINGFUL LONDON PRESS COVERAGE AT ALL -- WAS TO ENABLE THE TWO MINISTERS "TO TAKE STOCK OF EACH OTHER", PARTICULARLY SINCE THEY HAD NOT MET BEFORE. WD ARE TOLD "THEY GOT ON VERY WELL INDEED TOGETHER AND FORMED A GOOD PERSONAL BASIS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSIONS". MASON WILL MEET WITH BOURGES IN PARIS EARLY NEXT YEAR.

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3. UNDER THE ASSERTION THAT THEIR TALKS "WERE FRANK AND

THEIR EXCHANGES OF VIEWS CORDIAL" WE KNOW THAT IN THE
PLENARY DISCUSSIONS THE AGENDA TOUCHED ON ANGLO-FRENCH
COOPERATION IN ARMAMENTS (OFFSET FOR UK PURCHASE OF
FRANCO-GERMAN MILAN MISSILE, THE HELICOPTER PROGRAMS,
JAGUAR AIRCRAFT, AND THE QUESTION OF SALES TO THIRD
COUNTRIES), THE ISSUES OF RATIONALIZATION/STANDARDIZATION
AND THE US/UK MOU.

4. FROM A NUMBER OF COMMENTS MADE, WE CONCLUDE THAT THE
BRITISH CONSIDER DE ROSE'S STANCE IN BRUSSELS IN THE NAC
ON RATIONLIZATION/STANDARDIZATION "TO BE WELL AHEAD OF
HIS MINISTERS,. ALSO, IT APPEARS THAT BOURGES TOOK A
STRONG LINE ON THE NEED FOR EUROPEANS TO GET THEIR OWN
COLLABORATIVE HOUSE IN ORDER FIRST. IN THIS CONTEXT, THE
TWO MINISTERS APPARENTLY AGREED THAT ANGLO-FRENCH COOPER-
ATION IN ARMAMENTS IS A KEY ELEMENT. THE FRENCH EVIDENTLY
CONTINUE TO REMAIN SUSPICIOUS OF THE ANGLO-AMERICAN LINK
IN DEFENSE COOPERATION, HINTING THAT THE US INITIATIVE
IN NAC AND MASON'S EUROGROUP INITIATIVE COULD LEAD TO
"BUY AMERICAN" IN ANOTHER DISGUISE. APPARENTLY, MASON
MADE THE POINT THAT THERE IS "AN EMPTY CHAIR AT THE
EUROGROUP FOR FPANCE" (A POINT HE HAS MADE TO US SEVERAL
TIMES) AND BOURGES DECLINED THE BRITISH SUGGESTION THAT
FRANCE OCCUPY IT ON THE GROUNDS THAT EUROGROUP IS TOO
STRONGLY LINKED "INSTITUTIONALLY" TO NATO. THE FRENCH
TACK WAS TO PUSH THE QUADRIPARTITE FORUM AS THE BEST
MEANS FOR FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN AND CONTRIBUTION TO
ARMAMENTS STANDARDIZATION IN EUROPE. UNDERLYING THE
FRENCH POSITION ON STANDARDIZATION WAS THE EMPHASIS THEY
PLACED ON COOPERATION WITHIN EUROPE AND THE NEED FOR
EUROPEAN INDUSTRY TO REMAIN TECHNOLOGICALLY ABREAST OF
THE US.

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5. COMMENT: UE AGREE FULLY WITH THRUST OF PARA 6 REF A. A POINT WE WOULD ADD, HOWEVER, IS THAT FRENCH "CULTIVATION OF THE BRITISH CONNECTION" MAY BE MOTIVATED MORE BY A DESIRE TO KEEP AN EYE AND PERHAPS A TAMP ON THE STRONG ANGLO-AMERICAN LINK AS MUCH AS A COUNTER-WEIGHT TO THEIR PERCEPTION OF THE GROWING MILITARY STATURE OF THE FRG. THE FRENCH MUST SEE THAT US/UK RELATIONS ARE EXCELLENT UNDER WILSON AND THAT IT IS AN OBJECTIVE OF THE WILSON GOVERNMENT TO REINFORCE THE TRADITIONAL "SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP" AND MAKE ITS EXPRESSION A GROWING COOPERATION AND CLOSER CONSULTATION WITH WASHINGTON ON A WIDE VARIETY OF ISSUES. IN DEFENSE MATTERS IN GENERAL, AND PARTICULARLY ON RATIONALIZATION/STANDARDIZATION, THE FRENCH OBSERVE THE PRIMARY INITIATIVES ARE AMERICAN AND BRITISH. MOREOVER, THEIR OWN LINKS TO THE MAIN INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR PLAYING OUT THE MULTILATERAL ASPECTS OF THE US/UK INITIATIVES ARE WEAK. HENCE, GIVEN THE FRENCH PROCLIVITY FOR "INDEPENDENCE" IN DEFENSE POLICY, FOR READING INTO CLOSER COOPERATION THROUGH NATO THE DANGER OF "SUBORDINATION" TO US COMMAND, AND THE FACT THAT THEY SEE THEIR MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT AS THE LARGEST IN EUROPE, AND THE
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VALUE OF THEIR ARMS EXPORTS AS NEXT AFTER THE US AND USSR, THE FRENCH MAY BE MORE COMFORTABLE APPROACHING RATIONALIZATION/STANDARDIZATION AFTER THEY HAVE MADE PROGRESS BILATERALLY WITH THE BRITISH AND OTHERS. THE FRENCH KNOW THEY MAINTAIN THE LARGEST DEFENSE INDUSTRY IN WESTERN EUROPE, AND EVEN THOUGH TECHNOLOGICALLY THEY MAY LAG IN CERTAIN AREAS BEHIND THE BRITISH, THEY MUST SEE ANGLO-FRENCH COOPERATION AS THE KEY TO MAKING "EUROPE'S" WEIGHT FELT VIS-A-VIS THE AMERICAN INDUSTRIAL COLOSSUS.

RICHARDSON

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